Amendments To The Claims:

Please amend the claims as shown.

1 – 11 (canceled)

12. (new) A method for operating a fuel cell system. comprising:

supplying a process gas to the fuel cell system via a liquid ring pump wherein impurities contained in the process gas are removed by an operating liquid of the liquid ring pump; and

monitoring the contamination of the operating liquid.

13. (new) The method as claimed in claim 12, wherein the contamination of the operating liquid is monitored by measuring the conductivity of the operating liquid.

14. (new) The method as claimed in claim 13, further comprising interrupting the operation of a fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when a contamination upper limit of the of the operating liquid is exceeded.

15. (new) The method as claimed in claim 14, further comprising exchanging the operating liquid or purifying the operating liquid via a purifying device when a contamination lower limit value of the operating liquid is exceeded.

16. (new) The method as claimed in claim 15, wherein a component flow of the operating liquid is transmitted via the purifying device.

17. (new) The method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the purifying device includes an ion exchanger.

18. (new) The method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the operating liquid is cooled via a heat exchanger prior to transmission to the purifying device.

19. (new) The method as claimed in claim 18 wherein the operating capability of the purifying device is monitored.

20. (new) The method as claimed in claim 19, further comprising regenerating the purifying device and performing a switchover to a second purifying device or interrupting the operation of the fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when an inadequate purifying efficiency threshold of the purifying device is reached.

21. (new) The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the operating liquid simultaneously functions as cooling water for the fuel cell system.

22. (new) A fuel cell system, comprising:

a feed line that transmits a process gas;

a liquid ring pump connected to the feed line that compressing the process gas;

and operating liquid that purifies the process gas; and

a monitoring device that monitors the contamination of the operating liquid.

23. (new) A method for operating a fuel cell system, comprising:

passing an intake air through a first filter, wherein the filtered intake air contains a residual contaminant;

mixing the intake air with an operating liquid;

compressing the mixed intake air and operating liquid in a liquid ring pump;

transferring the residual contaminant contained in the compressed intake air to the operating liquid;

separating the operating liquid containing the residual contaminant from the compressed intake air via a liquid separator; and

transmitting the purified and compressed intake air to a fuel cell block of the fuel cell system; and

monitoring a contamination level of the operating liquid.

24. (new) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the compressed intake air contains a plurality of residual contaminants.

25. (new) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the contamination of the operating liquid is monitored by measuring the conductivity of the operating liquid.

26. (new) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising interrupting the operation of a fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when a contamination upper limit of the of the operating liquid is exceeded.

27. (new) The method as claimed in claim 26, wherein the operating liquid is exchanged or purified via a purifying device when a operating liquid contamination lower limit value is exceeded.

28. (new) The method as claimed in claim 27, wherein the purifying device includes an ion exchanger.

29. (new) The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the operating liquid is cooled via a heat exchanger prior to transmission to the purifying device.

30. (new) The method as claimed in claim 29, further comprising the method steps:

monitoring the efficiency of the purifying device,

switching-over to a second purifying device when an inadequate purifying efficiency threshold of the purifying device is reached, and

regenerating the purifying device.

31. (new) The method as claimed in claim 29, further comprising the method steps:

monitoring the efficiency of the purifying device,

interrupting the operation of the fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when an inadequate purifying efficiency threshold of the purifying device is reached, and

regenerating the purifying device.